

The Psychological Impact of Athletic Injury

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Introduction

Injuries can cause physical and psychological damage

Because mental health has a direct impact on physical healing, it is important for chiropractors to learn effective psychological coaching strategies when treating injured athletes. Doctors of chiropractic can assess the patient to determine which interventions are needed during the healing process, and when the athlete is emotionally ready to return to the field.



Psychological Response to Injury

Athletes can experience any of the following after onset of an injury:

General Pain	Stress/Anxiety	Depression
Exercise Addiction	Treatment Noncompliance	Fear

Pre-injury characteristics affecting injury response:

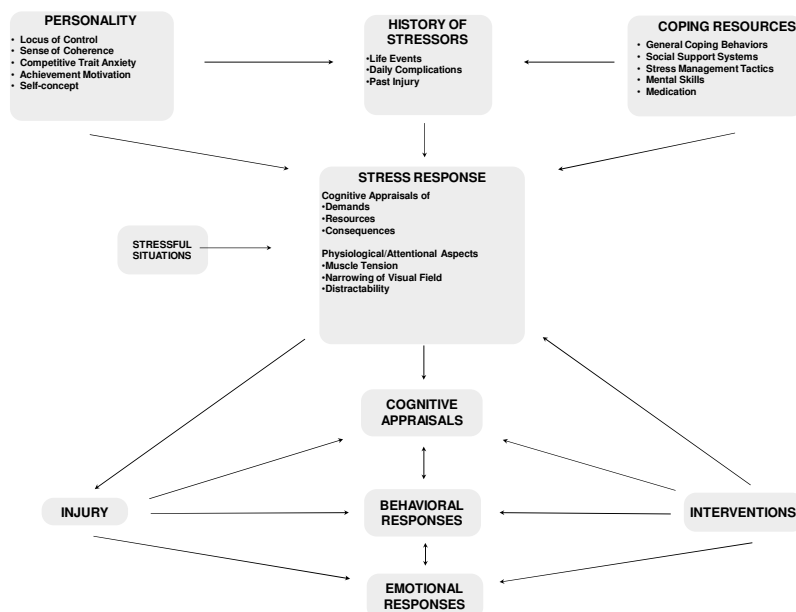
Aggression	Level of Self Esteem	Self Efficacy
Motivation	Education/Knowledge	Social Support

Situational factors involved in reaction to injury:

Nature and extent of injury	Type of sport
Time of injury during the season	Perception of cause of injury

Factors Related to the Psychological Impact of Injury

(Adopted from Theodorakis, Y., Beneca, A., Malliou, P., and Goudas, M., 1997)



References:

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Theodorakis, Y., Beneca, A., Malliou, P., and Goudas, M. (1997). Examining Psychological Factors During Injury Rehabilitation. *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation*, 6, 355-363.
Wagman, D., and Khellaf, M. (1996). Psychological Issues in Sport Injury Rehabilitation: Current Knowledge and Practice. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 31(3), 257-261.

Mind and Body

Chiropractors should assess the physical and psychological progress of the patient

In the initial consultation, chiropractors can:

- Build trust and rapport with the patient
- Understand the patient's interpretation of how the injury occurred
- Encourage the patient to commit to his/her healing

The patient's psychological needs can be determined with specific questions and careful evaluation of the patient's responses:

- What was going on in your life prior to your injury?
- How did the injury occur?
- How important is sports involvement to you?
- What does this injury mean to you?
- How do you feel as a result of the injury?
- What are your insecurities and fears about the future?
- Who is affected by your injury?
- How would your life be different right now if you were not injured?

The following techniques can support the psychological needs of the patient during injury rehabilitation:

Cognitive Restructuring
Relaxation Techniques
Rational Emotive Therapy

Motivation
Panic Mitigation
Imagery

